

Brief of Meeting with Representative Johnsrud

Sue Bangert, John Melby and Cynthia Moore met with Representative Johnsrud and his aide, Scott Loomans, on Thursday, July 15. Representative Johnsrud had received a letter from Sue earlier, describing the program redesign effort. This letter included some questions we have used to guide us in our discussions with stakeholders. Our discussion was quite informal and covered a broad range of issues related to waste management and recycling. The key points made by Rep Johnsrud were:

1. In general, Rep Johnsrud has not heard many issues about the waste management program or our services.

2. Open burning and uncontrolled dumping are very prevalent among his constituents, and they are sensitive to DNR's efforts to eliminate open burning and illegal dumping. Burning of paper and other household generated wastes is common. Also common is burning of the plastic bags used to collect household wastes.

One of the primary drivers for dumping is the lack of a means to get rid of "stuff" - material which is not accepted at landfills and which no one will haul away for a reasonable fee [or can drop it off at a location that is reasonably close]. Specific problems materials mentioned were air conditions and other appliances, paint, aluminum siding, and asbestos containing material. The lack of affordable disposal service in rural areas for materials not accepted in landfills is a real problem in rural areas. Not only do the sites pose potential risk to the environment, but they are unsightly. With the increase in population, once "hidden" dumps are now larger and more visible.

Neighbor complaints are more prevalent with the increasing population in the rural areas.

Salvage yards are a problem. There are few options available to dispose of used vehicles; the salvage and scrap yards that do exist operate with minimal regulation or oversight, and pose a risk to the environment.

Establishment of a regional drop-off site for hard to dispose of materials was one option we discussed which he felt would be well accepted by the population and would help resolve some of the problems currently observed.

3. Recycling is well accepted- people take materials to drop off centers. This did not appear to be a problem.

One interesting and popular service offered is an annual two-weekend waste tire collection program that is very popular among his constituents.

4. Household hazardous waste grants are good, and the collection that occurs is good as well. Also, waste oil recycling is good.

5. A "command & control" approach by DNR may be appropriate when dealing with large companies. It may not be appropriate to expect companies to always do the right thing without clearly defined management practices and operational procedures.

6. Non-metallic mining - erosion continues to be a problem. It is not always clear whom to contact on these issues.

Take-aways include:

- More education efforts, at least annually
- Build affordable infrastructure for collecting and managing (recycle, reuse, disposal) waste materials
- Need to consider rural issues in policy and program implementation